

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills – 13th March 2018)

COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Patricia Hardy	Communities and Housing	February 2018

NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Environmental Activities

Cambridge and Dukes Ward Councillors have agreed to jointly fund an extra clean-up of the Southport Promenade revetment after issues of rubbish and litter were highlighted by residents at the Area Committee.

Residents have brought a number of issues to our attention regarding St Elizabeth's Place which includes dog fouling, street lighting and damaged pathways. A site visit has taken place with Mead Fleet (Bellway Land Maintenance) and work will be carried out to try to mitigate any further issues.

The community skip programme for the Linacre Bridge Area has come to an end after consultation with Ward Councillors. Sefton Cleansing Department confirmed the amount of domestic waste in the skips was minimal and the majority was being used for commercial waste.

The Hate Crime Officer liaised between Merseyside Police and the cleansing team regarding the removal of offensive graffiti in Formby.

Area Coordination

L30 Million

The partnership group have commissioned "The Independent Initiatives" and "Intuitive Thinking" to undertake work, in regard, to drug and alcohol and healthy lifestyle choices in the area over the next 12 months.

Formby HUB

Formby Hub volunteers provided a Christmas Meal for 39 lonely and socially isolated people. The Mayor was in attendance and it was a great success.

Scrambler Bike Initiative

The presentation of this year's scrambler bike project took place at Merseyside Police Headquarters on the 9 January 2018. Young people and their parents attended the evening from four South Sefton schools to receive their prize. This was a four day skiing trip in Scotland. This is the third year the project has been delivered in partnership with Merseyside Police. This year, the young people were asked to work in groups of three to produce short videos about what they had learned during their educational sessions, highlighting the dangers of scrambler bike use and the potential consequences.

Domestic and Sexual Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Executive met on 15 January 2018 and discussed progress against the Strategy. This included a discussion about the recent homicide in Southport and whether the case fitted the criteria for a Domestic Homicide Review and this has now been confirmed that it did not, however, the Chair of the Sefton Safer Communities Partnership/Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing has asked for a review to be undertaken outside of this process.

Access 27 has been commissioned to deliver the 'Like Glue' programme which explores unhealthy relationships and domestic abuse. Preview sessions are being promoted to safeguarding leads in schools and colleges and to other partners to encourage "buy in" into the programme.

The new joint Merseyside wide sexual violence support contract went out to tender. Bids were moderated by a representative from each organisation on 6 and 7 February 2018 and a preferred bidder has been approved. Further questions and moderation will be undertaken prior to the final award of the contract.

Sefton and Knowsley Councils are working together to develop a joint domestic abuse public awareness campaign. A procurement exercise has taken place and 5 bids were submitted for consideration. Moderation took place between officers on 1 February 2018. The Domestic Abuse Operational Group will be involved in parts of the campaign design.

Hate Crime

The regional hate crime week was 5 - 12 February 2018. We had a fully-booked training event that week and we promoted the week using Yammer and other communications channels.

A Hate crime training session was held for members of staff in Access Sefton. Further briefings are planned for the Community Rehabilitation Company, Probation Service and the Hesketh Centre in 2018.

Equality and Diversity

The Navajo application has been submitted and has passed first stage of assessment. We are awaiting further details regarding the next stage of assessment.

A new disability group was launched on 19 February 2018. This group replaces the Sefton Access Forum and ABILITY groups. Sefton Equalities Partnership was also relaunched on the 20 February 2018 by Sefton CVS.

There will be an Exhibition at The Atkinson on 8 March in support of International Women's Day which has also been supported by the Sefton Safer Communities Partnership.

SSCP Update

The SSCP has agreed to fund a further number of initiatives with our local Police team since the last report which includes/included the purchasing of 45 Knife wands for premises within our night-time economy, extra resource to target high risk offenders of crime, additional resources for tackling issues in Southport and drug wipes.

Community Transition fund

A total of £604,762 has been approved for projects, leaving a balance of £420,431 uncommitted.

INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICE

Youth Offending Team (YOT) Performance

First Time Entrants - Performance is good and further reductions of first time entrants continue through successful out of court disposals such as Community Resolution interventions for low risk, minor offending.

In comparison with other Merseyside YOTs Sefton has achieved the largest reduction looking at figures from 2015/16 to 2016/17.

Custody Rate - Sefton's performance in the past has been historically high but has much improved and is now good. Sefton's rate is currently lower than England, Merseyside, and the North West.

Re-offending - The latest figures show an increase of reoffending, Sefton's rating is higher when compared with England, the North West and compared to other Merseyside YOTs. The number of young people re-offending has reduced therefore a smaller number of young people commit more offences.

The number of offenders (those that offend once) has significantly reduced, as a result of effective interventions. Less impact has been made with those that continue to re-offend. This group of young people are entrenched offenders, with complex needs and who are at increased risk of re-offending. It is harder for interventions to positively impact upon young people who may have a long history of neglect, domestic violence, or involvement with criminal groups/ gangs and may be subject to criminal exploitation.

Targeted Youth Prevention (TYP)

The quarterly performance report regarding TYP highlighted positive feedback from families,

partner agencies and young people who have accessed the service between September and December 2017. Family feedback is pivotal to quality assuring and improving the offer delivered through Targeted Youth Prevention.

As services transition to a locality model the team recognises the need to have young people and families' part of that process. The team will develop a focus group in January 2018 which will focus on the views of the family ensuring that their engagement and 'voice' can influence and contribute to service design.

There are numerous examples of positive feedback including the following:

- Voice of the Parent *"You are the only one who has actually said you could help us, other agencies have said you need to do something else first. I feel confident that you have said you can co-ordinate the agencies and that has given us hope that we can be helped."* (Feedback from parent who have Early help assessment in place living in Southport).
- *"Just wanted to call you directly to say thank you to TYP for the work you are doing with students at Hillside high School. Sue has been a breath of fresh air and we are seeing a real difference with behaviours of the students she is working with"* (Feedback from partner agency Hillside High School)
- *"Thanks for all your help with my son he is managing his anger better and taking his medication."* (Feedback from a parent with 11 old son diagnosed with ADHD).

Recommendations

It is requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the report.

LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES

Suffragettes on Tour

The library service has worked in partnership with Edge Hill University to produce four pull-up banners celebrating the Suffrage movement in Sefton. Events such as the 1909 'campaign of disruption' in Southport are highlighted, as is the role of courageous local women such as Dora Marsden. The banners have been unveiled at Crosby Library and will tour the libraries over the next 12 weeks. It is also hoped they will be displayed at Southport Town Hall, where Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst gave speeches. Students from the University will undertake further research to highlight the contribution of more Sefton women toward the Suffrage cause, and this new material will be used to create additional banners to extend the profile of the display.

Beyond the War Memorials

The first stage of this WWI commemorative project has been completed. Local artist Angie Thompson has worked with four local primary schools across Sefton to reveal the experiences of Sefton soldiers during the War. The children have produced artwork inspired by War Memorials in Bootle Crosby & Formby, and their pictures will go on display in each school's local library. The images will also be featured in letters sent out to the last known residences of the fallen soldiers.

THE ATKINSON

Year of the Volunteer was launched at The Atkinson on 6 Feb in the Children's Library in conjunction with CVS and Sefton Comms.

Atkinson will be hosting a June **Volunteer fair** as part of the year-long celebration.

Dementia Training – From January 2018 The Atkinson is providing Dementia Friends Training to the general public, we have two champions who can deliver training, they have offered it to all staff, volunteers and partners and are now hosting sessions for anyone interested to learn about becoming a Dementia Friend. Booking is through the Alzheimer's Society website

Viking: Rediscover the Legend – The Atkinson launches a major touring exhibition of Viking treasures from the British Museum and York Museum on Thursday 29 March 2018. Historian and broadcaster Michael Wood will launch the exhibition with an illustrated talk at 3.00 p.m.

Under The Sea was launched at The Atkinson on Saturday 11 February. Funded by the Postcode Lottery and The Atkinson Development Trust, participants from the Sefton CVS 'Buddy Up' scheme created a new animation for The Atkinson's museum exploring environmental sustainability.

HOUSING

Liverpool City Region

I represent the Council on the Sub-Regional Housing & Spatial Planning Board (feeds into the LCR Combined Authority Strategic Agenda) and plans had been progressing with identifying sub-regional Housing Needs and development of a Strategy. The Board have agreed the framework for a Strategy, and officers across the sub-region will be contributing to the development of this strategy.

Recently the Homes and Communities Agency announced the availability of a Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to help unlock large housing development schemes. Part of the fund is only available for Combined Authorities to bid for. The LCR CA have a completed a bid and application for the city region, which was submitted at the end of September 2017. The outcome of this bid was due to be announced at the end of January, but we still await notification of the outcome.

The Government have also announced additional funding to develop services to combat rough sleeping. £27m has been offered to 3 Combined Authorities: Liverpool City Region, West Midlands, and Manchester. The Board will be looking to oversee the development of proposals to utilise the resources to be offered to LCR CA. It is likely that some form of a 'Housing First' service proposal will be developed.

I am overseeing this work and engagement on behalf of Sefton.

Registered Provider Sector

We are looking to re-establish new relationships with the Registered Provider (RP) sector in the context of their operating models and principles. It is apparent to many that some are increasingly behaving as private companies; we need to redefine our partnerships in this context, particularly given other regulatory changes.

There are also opportunities to work positively with housing associations on issues such as welfare reform, improving health outcomes, sharing data and support to deliver council priorities, which I would like to explore.

I have recently received a report, which reveals that housing associations have recently completed or are currently building 337 new affordable homes across 12 different sites in the borough. There are also a number of other schemes in the pipeline, including some that will be delivered through Planning Section 106 agreements.

Work by a collaboration of 5 housing associations has led to a successful Estates Renewal bid focussing on parts of Bootle. The value of the bid was £150k, and was seeking a share of the £30 million of 'enabling funding'. Enabling funding is provided to help landlords at the early stage of estate regeneration proposals, and to help them develop such proposals.

The RP consortia have confirmed they will use this funding to pay for consultancy work to look at designing a collaborative investment plan for all RPs property in the area. The RPs have procured Halsall Lloyd Partnership consultancy to carry out this work. The funding provides an opportunity to allow us to collectively look at the issues in the area, and come up with some plans to address these issues over the next 12 months or so.

Homes and Community Agency

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) have announced a number of programmes and funding, which are designed to help deliver new house building. Some specifics:

- £1.7bn accelerated construction fund – aimed at bringing forward surplus public sector land. HCA will require developers to build at a faster pace on selected sites. Sefton submitted an expression of interest in February, and we have been invited to submit proposals, with Bellway Homes, for the former Peoples & TT Cables site in Bootle. We will be liaising with HCA and develop proposals over the coming months;
- Housing Infrastructure Fund, Two programmes exist to support infrastructure including the 'Marginal Viability Fund' available to all Councils, and the 'Forward Funding Programme' available to upper tier authorities including Combined Authorities (see above LCR comments). I approved a Sefton bid for infrastructure funding to help deliver new housing on the 503-509 Hawthorne Road site. We have recently learnt that this bid wasn't successful. However, the notification we received

from HCA states; *....for unsuccessful bids MHCLG will explore using some of the additional £10 billion of funding allocated to housing delivery in the Autumn Budget to support some local authorities to develop their housing ambitions.* This suggests there may still be opportunities to explore funding support for our scheme/site.

Housing Development Company

I am the Cabinet Member sponsoring the establishment of a council wholly owned housing company that could build and sell (and/or rent) properties, which was approved by Cabinet in October. For just over a year a project team investigated the viability of establishing a company to develop new housing across the borough primarily for Sefton residents to purchase.

Over the next few months, the company will be formally established and will then begin to bring forward detailed designs and proposals for priority sites across the borough. There are a lot of detailed activities to be addressed during the transition to delivery period, leading to the legal establishment of the company.

The activities fall under broad headings, covering:

- (i) Corporate & Governance arrangements, such as the development of the formal governance arrangements, setting out in more detail decisions the Council will take as shareholder and decisions the company will take;
- (ii) People and support services arrangements for the company will include recruiting suitable lead staff, and providing Service Level Agreements to pay for council support services;
- (iii) Development preparation including determining the right constructor procurement arrangements;
- (iv) Financial arrangements for funding and financial management of the company

Private Rented Sector Licencing

We are progressing well with the private landlord licensing scheme. We urgently need licensing schemes in Bootle, Seaforth/Waterloo and Southport. A formal report and business case was approved by Cabinet on 1st December 2016, setting out our proposals.

Legal provisions will enable us to have three different schemes - focusing on the licensing of all private landlords in Bootle, but developing stronger 'Additional HMO' licensing schemes to cover more types of HMO properties for Southport and Waterloo.

Cabinet formally approved the establishment of these schemes on the 7th of September. The three schemes will be implemented in Sefton on 1st March 2018.

An Overview & Scrutiny working group has met to consider setting up a performance framework, so we can try to evaluate the effect of our schemes in future.

High Rise Fire Safety

Since the awful events suffered in the fire at Grenfell Towers in London, all high-rise residential properties have been subject to fire safety concerns. The Government

required all (stock owning) Local Authorities and housing associations to submit samples of cladding materials for fire safety testing. One Vision Housing (OVH) own two high-rise blocks, which were found to have external cladding made of aluminium composite materials (ACMs), which had failed Government fire safety tests. OVH responded immediately to remove this cladding.

Since then the Council (together with Merseyside Fire & Safety Service) have worked with OVH to ensure the safety of residents who live in the buildings. OVH came forward with their preferred solution for the treatment of the blocks and replacement of the cladding in September 2017, and submitted a planning application which was approved early in October. They are currently in dialogue with the Councils Building Control team to agree the detail of the work they will undertake. OVH have begun undertaking preparation works in advance of implementing reinstatement works.

Council officers together with Merseyside Fire & Safety Service have undertaken fire safety audits of all (21) high rise buildings in Sefton over July and August, to ensure they are safe. Officers from Housing Standards and Building Control have spent approximately 270 hours of work on inspecting the properties, and completing reports for the owners in conjunction with MF&RA.

We continue to work closely with the Fire Authority and have begun to carry out follow up visits on some of the higher risk tower blocks, to ensure any hazards identified have been removed or reduced to acceptable levels.

I have agreed further communications that will be managed with Sefton MP's at the request from the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Housing and Planning Act - Private rented sector enforcement

The Act was introduced in the summer of 2016 and includes six measures designed to tackle rogue landlords and property agents:

- Banning orders for most prolific offenders;
- Database of rogue landlords/property agents;
- Civil penalties of up to £30,000;
- Extension of Rent Repayment Orders;
- Tougher Fit and Proper Person test for landlords;
- Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme data sharing.

I have recently considered and approved a policy on the introduction of Civil Penalties, which will allow us to fine landlords as an alternative to pursuing prosecutions through the legal system. I hope this will begin to be implemented in the coming months.

The Database of Rogue landlords and Banning Orders will be introduced in April 2018, even though we await the new regulations to be introduced by Government on their implementation. I intend to review the Council's own housing enforcement policies when there is greater clarity over all of these new measures.

In the meantime officers in the Housing Standards team take enforcement actions and occasional prosecutions.

Empty Properties

I recently received a report which monitored the levels of empty homes in the borough, and provided information on the actions we are taking to address this issue. The following table shows the total numbers of empty homes and the numbers of Long Term empty homes (6 months+), over recent years in the borough.

	Apr-13	Apr-14	Apr-15	Apr-16	Apr-17	5 yr Avg.
Number of empty homes	5,426	5,822	5,865	5,228	5,252	5,519
Proportion of empty dwellings (% of all dwellings)	4.33	4.63	4.65	4.13	4.14	4.4
Number of long term empty homes (> 6 months)	3,315	3,190	3,359	3,080	3,086	3,206
Proportion of long term empty homes (% of all dwellings)	2.64	2.54	2.66	2.44	2.43	2.55

Source: Sefton Council Tax

Properties left vacant for greater than two years

Sefton's Empty Homes Strategy focuses on returning long-term empty residential properties back into use, with particular focus on problematic properties which have been empty for more than 2 years. The table below identifies the number and proportion of homes that are left empty for over two years. It is these properties that tend to have the greatest negative impact on neighbourhoods and communities. Poorly maintained properties can act as a magnet for anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse, fly tipping and other environmental problems. The Council uses both informal and formal action to help bring these longer-term properties back into use.

	Apr-13	Apr-14	Apr-15	Apr-16	Apr-17	5 yr Avg.
Number of longer term empty homes (> 2 years)	1,222	1327	1,350	1,131	1,153	1,237
Proportion of longer term empty homes as a proportion of the total dwellings in Sefton	0.97	1.06	1.07	0.89	0.91	0.98

Source: Sefton Council Tax

We continue to take actions to bring long term empty properties back into use. We have recently completed an enforced sale on a property in Southport, which had been empty many years and had caused problems in the neighbourhood, described in the case study below.

We are pursuing similar action on a further 4 problematic empty properties.

Empty Homes case example.

A house at Manchester Road, Southport had been left abandoned for over 17 years since the previous owner went into a nursing home and has since deceased. A very large nursing homes fee debt of circa £88,000 owed to the Council had arisen which was secured against the property by way of registered legal charges. The Council also received several complaints about the property: causing damp issues to a neighbouring property, becoming a magnet for anti-social behaviour and was insecure. This led to the Council having to undertake costly statutory enforcement works and registering more local land charges on the property of circa £4,000 owed to the Council.

This left the Council with a very large debt over a property which was deteriorating, devaluing, having a negative impact on the local area and causing distress to the neighbours.

The Council had to think imaginatively in our dealings with the property to find a long-term solution that would bring the property back into use and recover all the debts owing to the Council, bearing in mind it was a sensitive issue dealing with nursing home fees. In addition no one had taken out probate when the previous owner died creating a problem with the ownership title.

The Council was successful in obtaining a Court Order for Possession and Sale; this allowed the Council to act as Mortgagee in Possession to enforce the sale. In December 2017 the property sold for £120,000. The Council were able to recover all of its debts registered on the property. It is the new owner's intention to renovate the property, move in and make it a family home.

Housing Development

Developer Bellway Homes have made progress with the Klondyke Phase 2&3 site, which is the final phase of new development from the former HMRI programme. Bellway Homes began construction of new housing in August 2017. Communications have been ongoing with local residents and will continue. The first homes have been completed and new families have begun to move in during January.

Homeless Services and Housing Options Service

The Council has a legal duty to adopt a Homelessness Strategy. We adopted the current strategy back in September 2013, together with a Delivery Plan. During the course of 2018, we will have to undertake a formal review of homelessness in Sefton, with a view to adopting a new strategy by September 2018. Neil Morland consultancy have been appointed to undertake this work.

The Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) is due to come into force from April 2018. The principle behind the Act is to confer a legal duty on local authorities to provide homeless prevention services to all people who are potentially homeless. This mirrors the current legislation already enacted in Wales.

The current legislation (Housing Act 1996 as amended) broadly states that we must provide "housing advice to all" and "homeless assessment and resolution to those in priority need". There was previously no legislation covering what is referred to as "prevention activity," rather it is promoted as good practice. Most local authorities only offer specific homeless prevention services to those who are deemed to be in priority need.

The Act will enforce a statutory duty to provide homeless prevention services to all people who are threatened with homelessness irrespective of whether they are in priority or not. The Act will offer more protection for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, at an earlier stage, to a greater number of people than we are currently obliged to assist.

We will need to monitor and assess the impact of the new measures on the demand for Council services, particularly as we move toward the introduction of Locality teams in 2018 as part of the Councils Public Sector Reform Programme.

A **Rough Sleeper Count** was undertaken on one night in November 2017. As it is undertaken during one night it can only demonstrate a snapshot of the extent of Rough Sleeping, which can obviously change on a daily basis.

The final estimated figure for Sefton that has been submitted to the DCLG for this year (2017) is nine (9) people, all of whom we were already aware of and had been offered and refused services. All were identified in Southport. The figure of nine (9) is an increase on the figure for last year, which was 4. The Council commissions rough sleeper outreach service to engage with this client group, and encourage them into services and off the streets. The Council also commissions overnight 'sit up services' for rough sleepers, with 15 spaces available within hostels in Southport and Bootle.

For comparison the number of reported Rough Sleepers for our neighbouring Councils is:

Liverpool- 33 (an increase from the 2016 figure of 21)

Halton- 4 (an increase from the 2016 figure of 1)

Knowsley- 0 (a decrease from the 2016 figure of 3)

Wirral- 14 (an increase from the 2016 figure of 10)

St. Helens- 9 (an increase from 2 in 2016)

Leasehold house sales

At its September meeting, this O&S Committee considered a report on leasehold house sales, as requested at a Meeting of the Council held on 26 January 2017. The report showed the extent of leasehold house sales nationally and in Sefton over recent years. Committee will have noted the high proportion of leasehold house sales in Sefton in recent years (eg 92.7% in 2016-17).

However the purchasers of these homes, including a large number of first-time buyers (including those within Sefton) are increasingly complaining that at the point of sale they are not being made fully aware of the associated and ongoing costs of buying a leasehold property. Members of the Committee share concerns about the alleged abuses of leaseholders by housing developers or the companies who take on the freehold titles.

The Government have responded to these concerns and undertook a consultation exercise in advance of potential new legislation. I can confirm that I submitted a response to this consultation on behalf of Sefton Council, to share the evidence on leasehold house sales in Sefton, to express the concerns about the alarmingly rapid rise in new build houses sold as leasehold and support reform which results in new house sales which can no longer be sold as leasehold.

The Government's response to this consultation was published on the 21st December 2017. The full published response can be accessed here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/670204/Tackling_Unfair_Practices_-_gov_response.pdf

A further report on the Governments consultation response and proposals will be brought to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

I have also be working with officers to agree information which has been placed on the Council's website offering guidance on leasehold sales to help raise the awareness of the issues of leasehold house sales. This is available;

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/housing/tackling-unfair-practices-in-the-leasehold-market.aspx>